

MARVEL

22

LGY#647

**CANTWELL
UNZUETA
D'ARMATA**

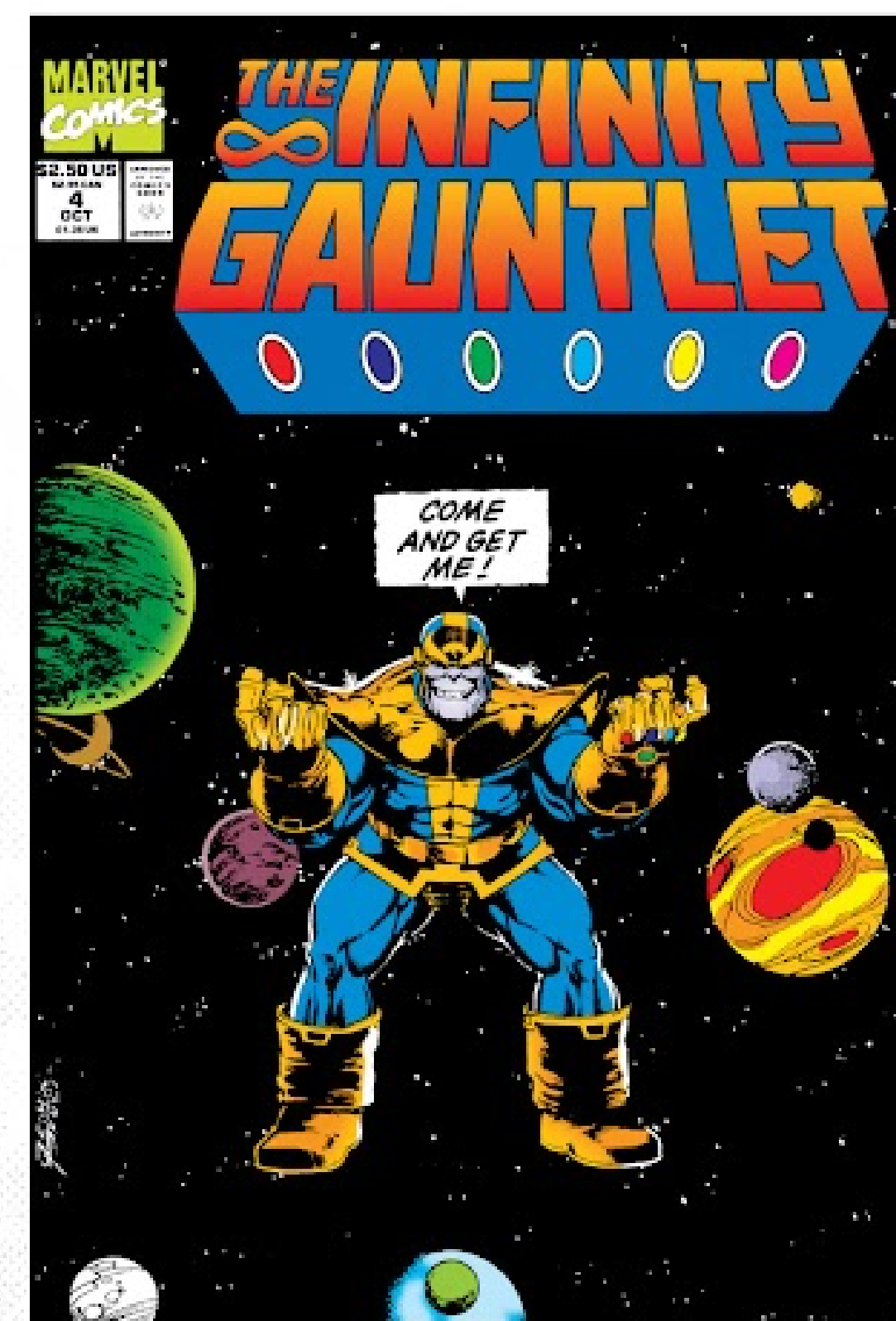
IRON MAN



GEORGE PÉREZ 1954-2022



"George is one of those ridiculously gifted talents of whom you could ask anything and he would give it to you, in many cases better than you asked." — **CHRIS CLAREMONT**



MARVEL COMICS PAUSES TO REFLECT ON THE LIFE AND CAREER OF BELOVED WRITER AND LEGENDARY ARTIST GEORGE PÉREZ, who was widely known and respected for his incredible talent, kindness and generosity in the comics community and beyond. During his career at Marvel, he contributed to titles such as *Inhumans*, *Fantastic Four* and two long runs on *Avengers*, including his landmark work on *JLA/Avengers*. Pérez co-created Marvel's first Latin American Super Hero and first Puerto Rican mainstream character, Hector Ayala, A.K.A. White Tiger. Pérez had huge hits at DC with *New Teen Titans* and *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. And as both a writer and penciler, he reinvented *Wonder Woman*. He was renowned for his ability (and desire) to include huge numbers of characters in a panel, cleanly and clearly.

Pérez made an indisputable impact on the comics community and its fans. He was well-known for being the friendliest and most approachable creator, especially at conventions. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him and were touched by his many decades of work.

Iron Man intervened when the mercenary Switchback stole a set of classified weapons plans. After being defeated by Iron Man, Switchback revealed that he was working for Source Control, an international black market for high-powered weaponry and technology.

Iron Man reached out to his friend Rhodey, A.K.A. War Machine, to help him take down Source Control. Rhodey revealed to Tony that their old colleague Vic Martinelli was also somehow involved with Source Control-- and that he had been killed.

UNKNOWN VARIABLES



WRITER • CHRISTOPHER CANTWELL ARTIST • ANGEL UNZUETA
COLOR ARTIST • FRANK D'ARMATA LETTERER • VC's JOE CARAMAGNA

COVER • ALEX ROSS

VARIANT COVERS • BJÖRN BAREND; ALEXANDER LOZANO

DESIGNER • CARLOS LAO

ASSISTANT EDITOR • MARTIN BIRO ASSOCIATE EDITOR • ANNALISE BISSA
EDITOR • TOM BREVOORT EDITOR IN CHIEF • C.B. CEBULSKI

IRON MAN CREATED BY STAN LEE, LARRY LIEBER, DON HECK & JACK KIRBY

STRANGE THAT VIC MARTINELLI IS DEAD. HE WAS...JUST ONE OF THOSE GUYS WHO SEEMED LIKE HE'D LIVE FOREVER.

IT GOT BRUTAL IN HERE.

YEAH. REAL BAD.

VIC WAS ALREADY IN *WITNESS PROTECTION* WHEN TONY HIRED HIM AS THE *HEAD OF SECURITY* FOR STARK INTERNATIONAL.* BUT EVEN BEFORE THAT, THERE WERE RUMORS HE HAD A BACKGROUND IN *MILITARY INTELLIGENCE*.

*IN IRON MAN #147. --TOM

<MOLECULAR ANALYSIS...>
<MINERAL ELEMENT TRACES DETECTED.> <ATOMIC SIGNATURES.> <CROSS-INDEXING ESTIMATE: 39 HOURS.>

TAKE YOUR SWEET TIME, B.O.S.S....

BACK IN THE DAY, THE THREE OF US WERE A KIND OF *INNER CIRCLE*. BUT THEN...VIC WAS OUT.

HE'D STAYED ON DURING OBADIAH STANE'S *MORE-THAN-HOSTILE TAKEOVER* OF THE COMPANY. TONY SAID NO HARD FEELINGS, BUT...

...THEN HE FOUND OUT VIC HAD LOST A *MODEL 1 ARMOR SUIT* IN MEXICO. VIC DESTROYED IT WITH *FRANK CASTLE*.*

IN PUNISHER: THE PRIZE #1. --TOM

BUT TONY ALREADY HAD HIS *EXCUSE*. CONTRARY TO WHAT HE SAYS, THE MAN CAN HOLD A GRUDGE. BUT NOW...

I WANT TO SAY I DIDN'T CALL HIM BACK BECAUSE I WAS BUSY. DISTRACTED.

I DIDN'T ANSWER THE PHONE EITHER, TONY.

WE DIDN'T ANSWER THE PHONE. AND NOW VIC IS DEAD.

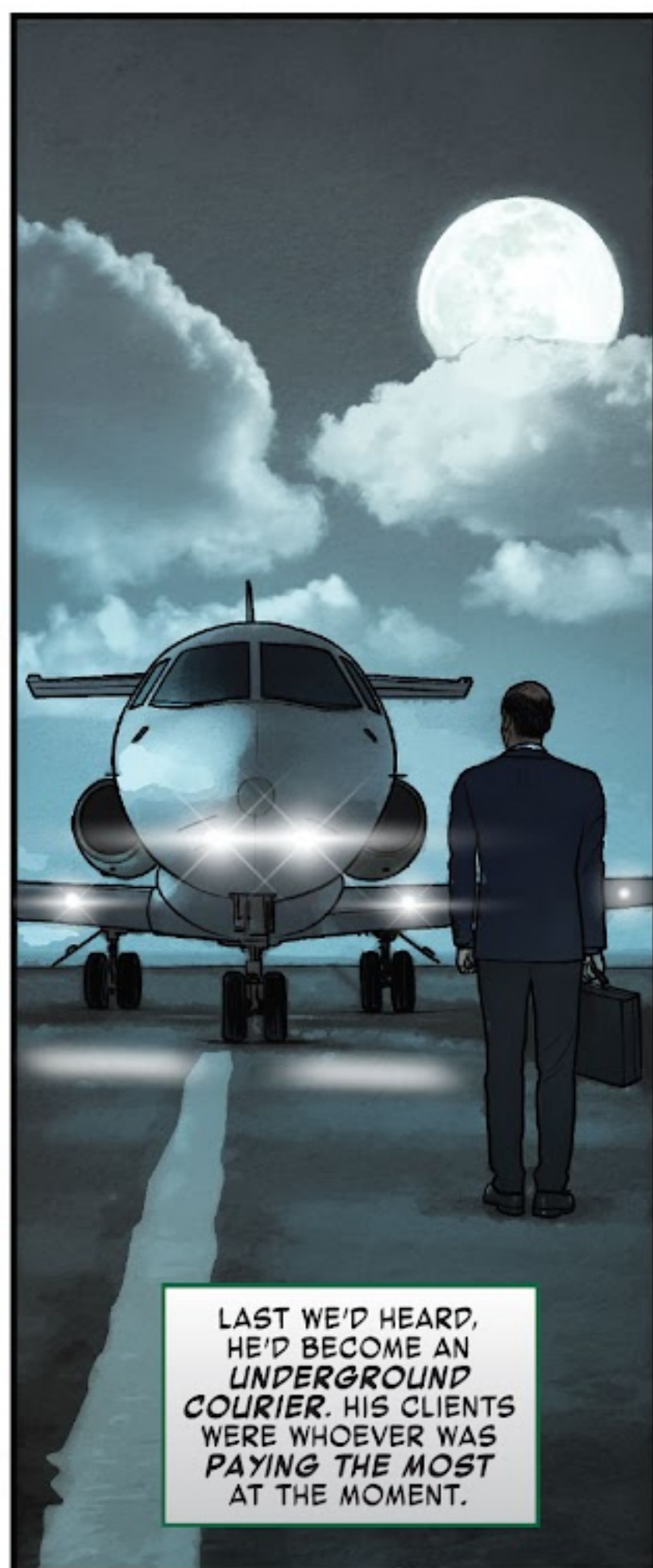
WHY DIDN'T WE
ANSWER THE
PHONE? WELL...



...ONCE VIC WAS OUT OF A
JOB, HE HAD TO RELY ON
HIS **UNIQUE SPECIALTIES**.
COVERT INTELLIGENCE.
DARK NETWORKS.



LAST WE'D HEARD,
HE'D BECOME AN
UNDERGROUND
COURIER. HIS CLIENTS
WERE WHOEVER WAS
PAYING THE MOST
AT THE MOMENT.



HE TRANSPORTED SOME OF
THE MOST **TOP-SECRET**
INTEL ACROSS THE GLOBE.
AND APPARENTLY, HE WAS
PRETTY DAMN **GOOD** AT IT.



BUT YEARS IN, HE'D
WORKED FOR **CORRUPT**
GOVERNMENTS. TYRANTS.
EVEN SHUTTLED BACK AND
FORTH AS A CONTRACTOR
FOR **HYDRA** FOR A BIT.



HARD TO
FORGIVE
THAT KIND OF
ASSOCIATION.





AT SOME POINT, HE GOT CAUGHT UP IN THIS **BLACK MARKET** FOR HIGH-GRADE TECH AND WEAPONS CALLED **SOURCE CONTROL**.



THE MOST **DANGEROUS** STUFF IN EXISTENCE FOR SALE.



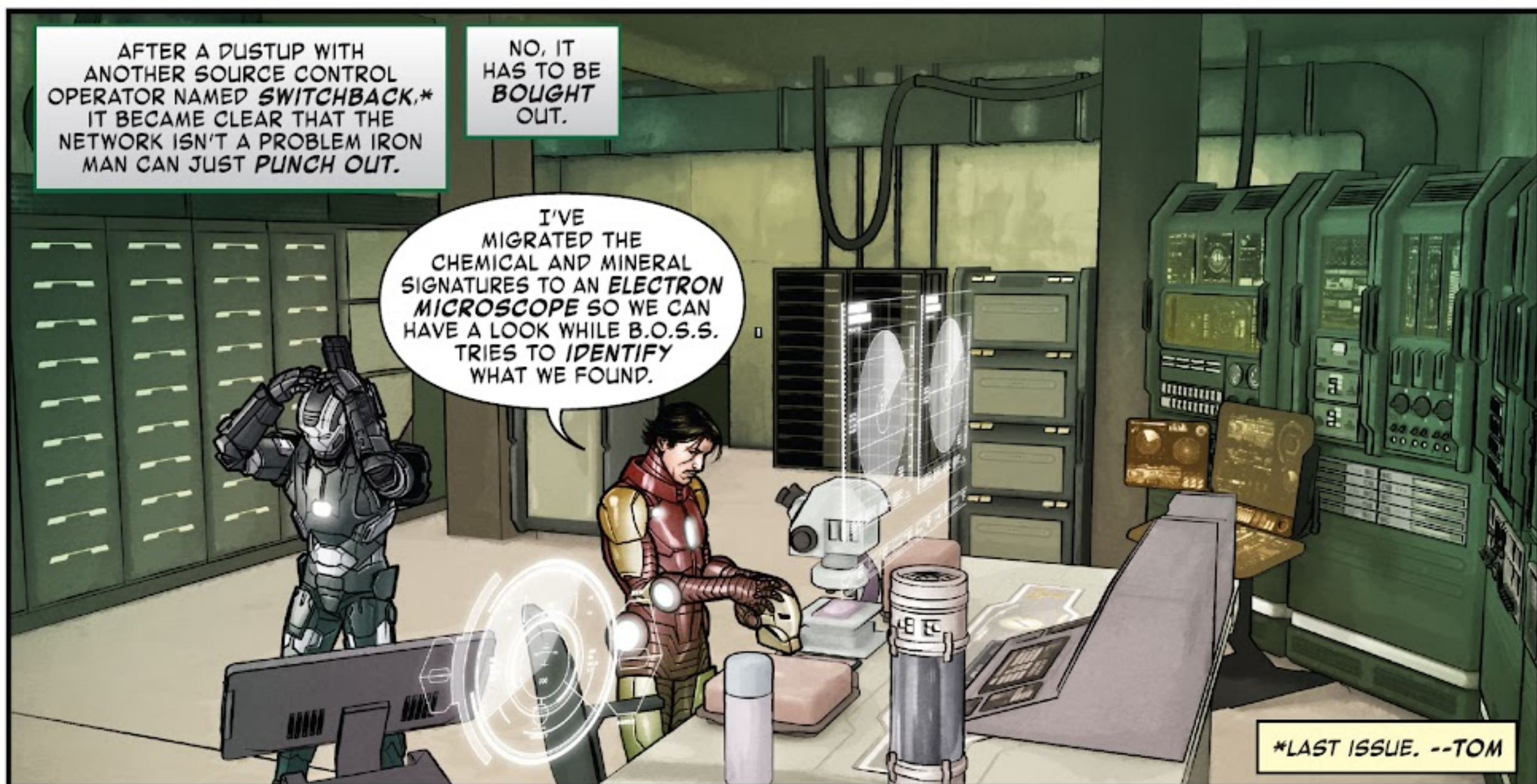
AND HE'D GOTTEN HIS HANDS ON SOMETHING SO **TROUBLING** THAT HE HAD A **CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE** FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS AND CALLED US.

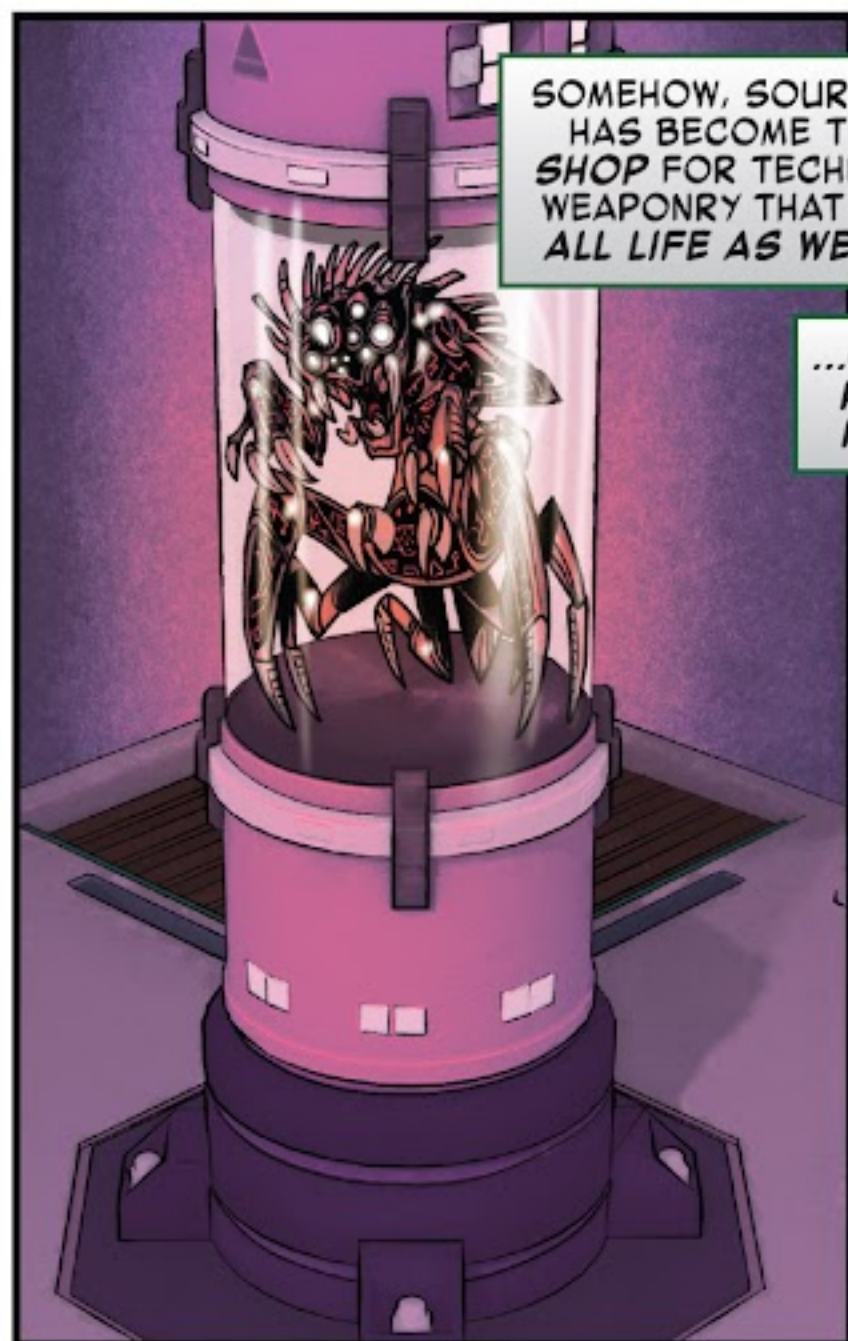


WE DIDN'T GET TO HIM IN TIME. THAT'S ON **US** NOW.

NO MATTER WHAT VIC WAS GUILTY OF, I'M HAVING A TOUGH TIME FORGIVING **MYSELF**.

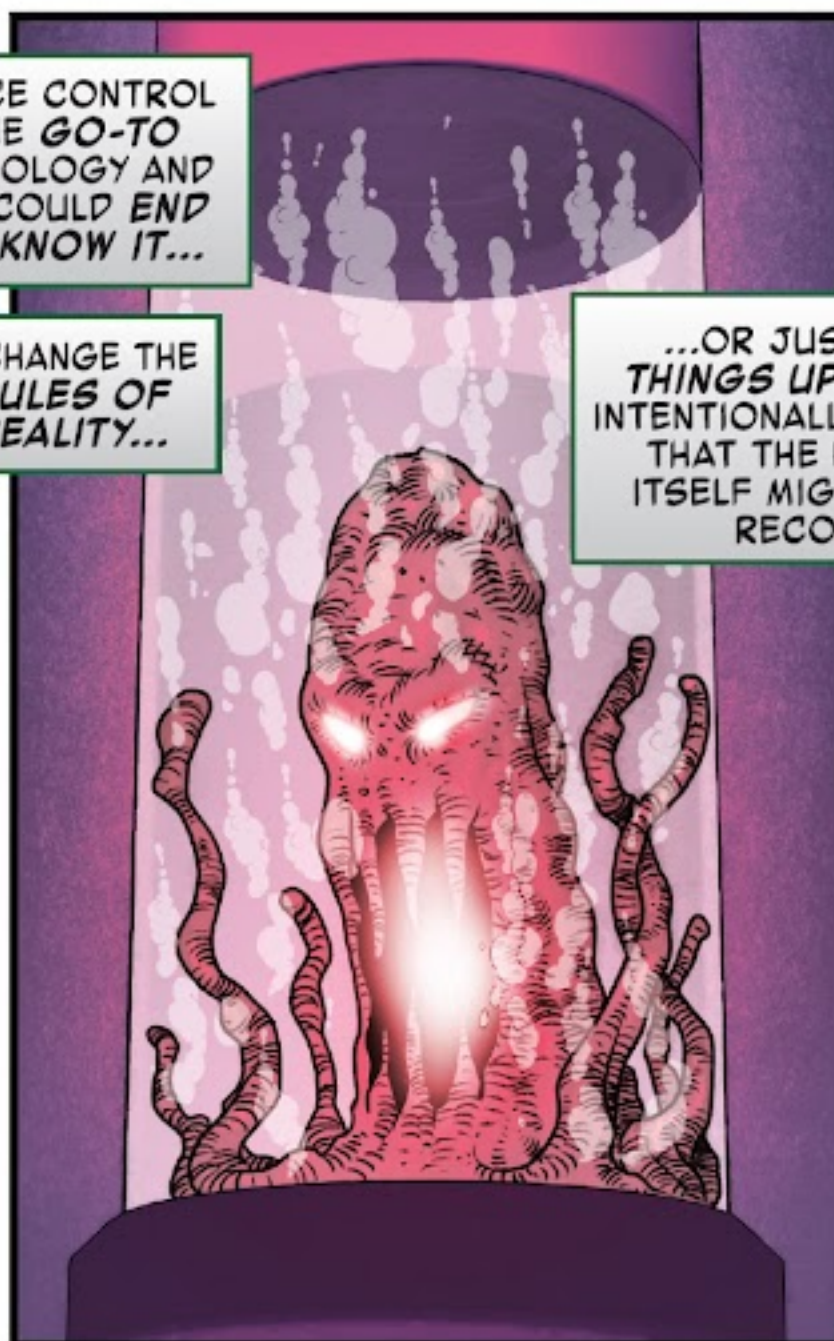
AND AFTER WE SAW THE **MURDER SCENE**, I KNOW **TONY** FELT THE SAME WAY.



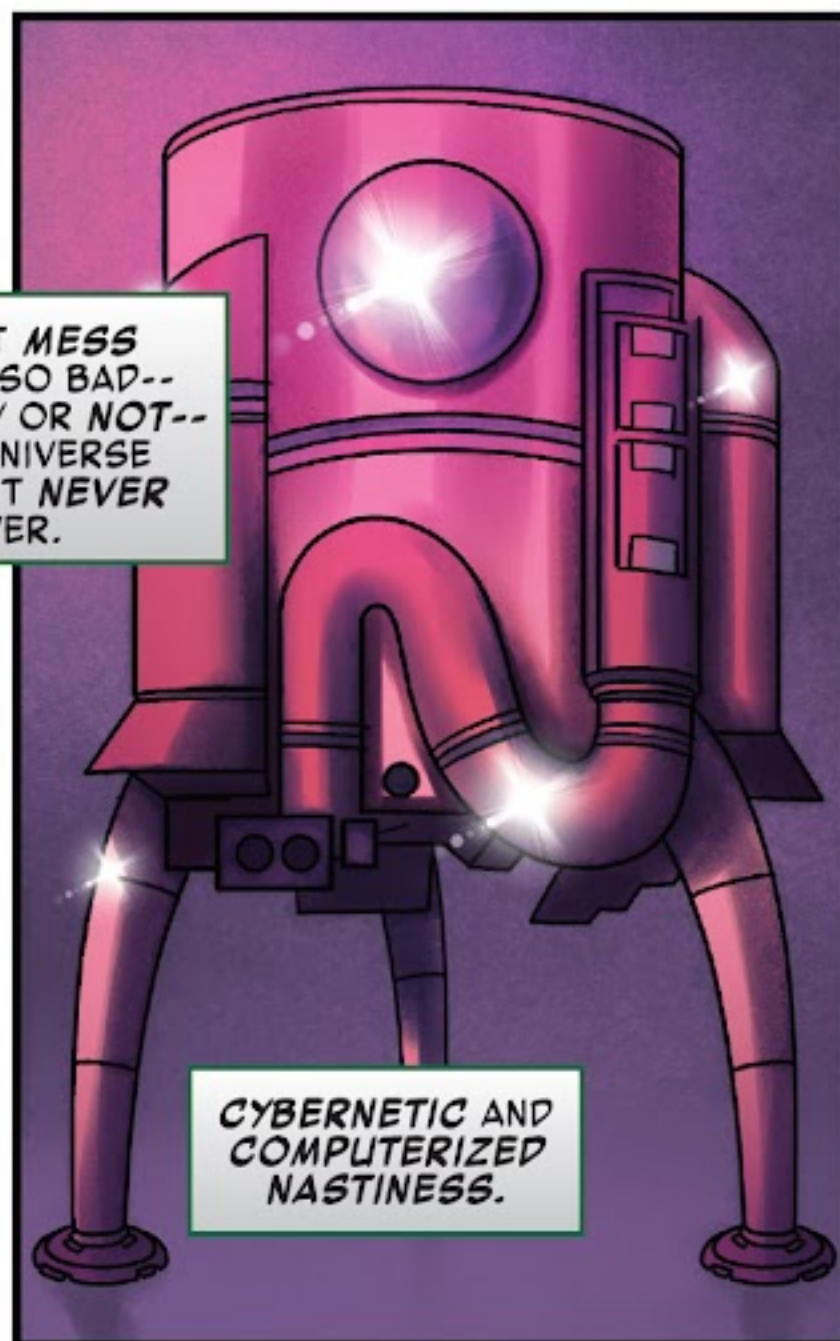


SOMEHOW, SOURCE CONTROL HAS BECOME THE *GO-TO SHOP* FOR TECHNOLOGY AND WEAPONRY THAT COULD *END* ALL LIFE AS WE KNOW IT...

...CHANGE THE *RULES OF REALITY*...



...OR JUST MESS *THINGS UP* SO BAD-- INTENTIONALLY OR NOT-- THAT THE UNIVERSE ITSELF MIGHT *NEVER* RECOVER.

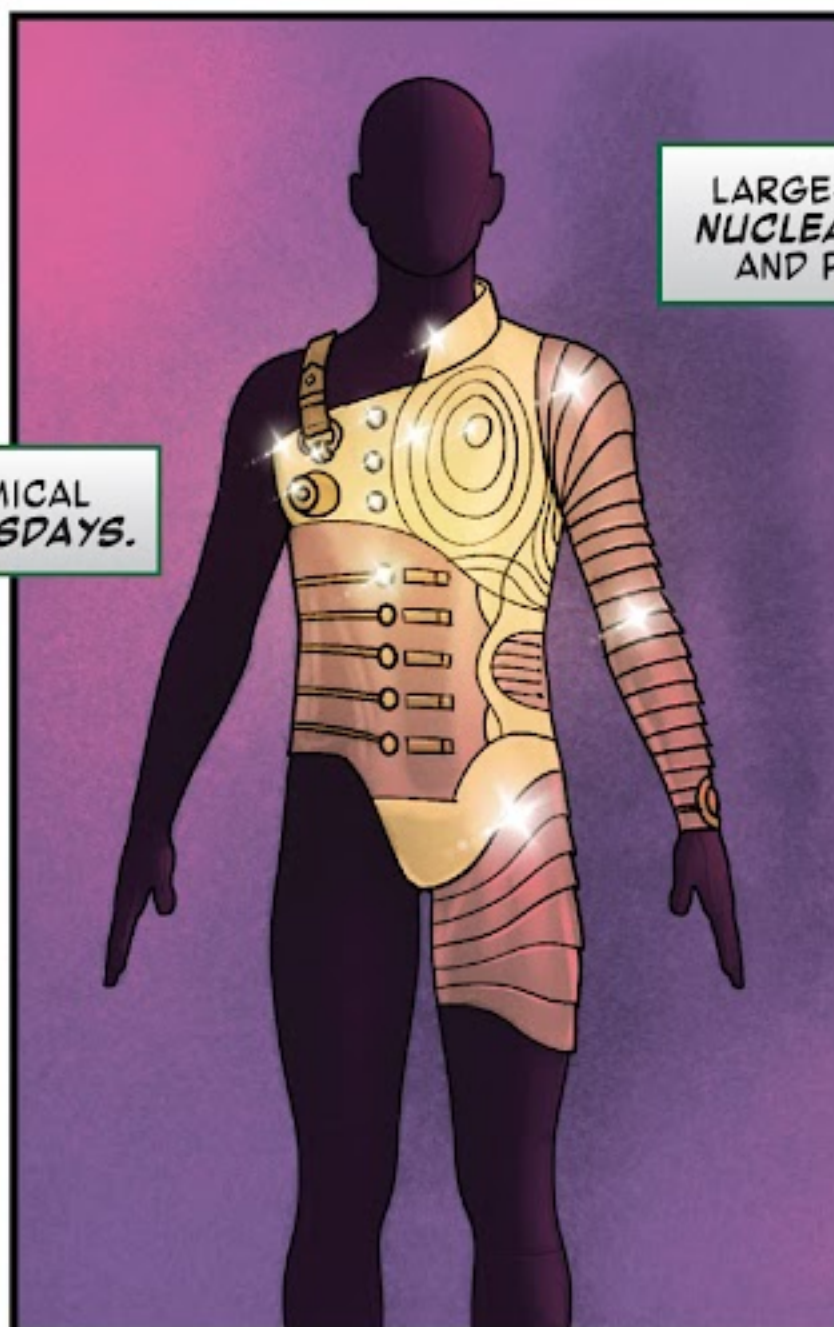


CYBERNETIC AND COMPUTERIZED NASTINESS.

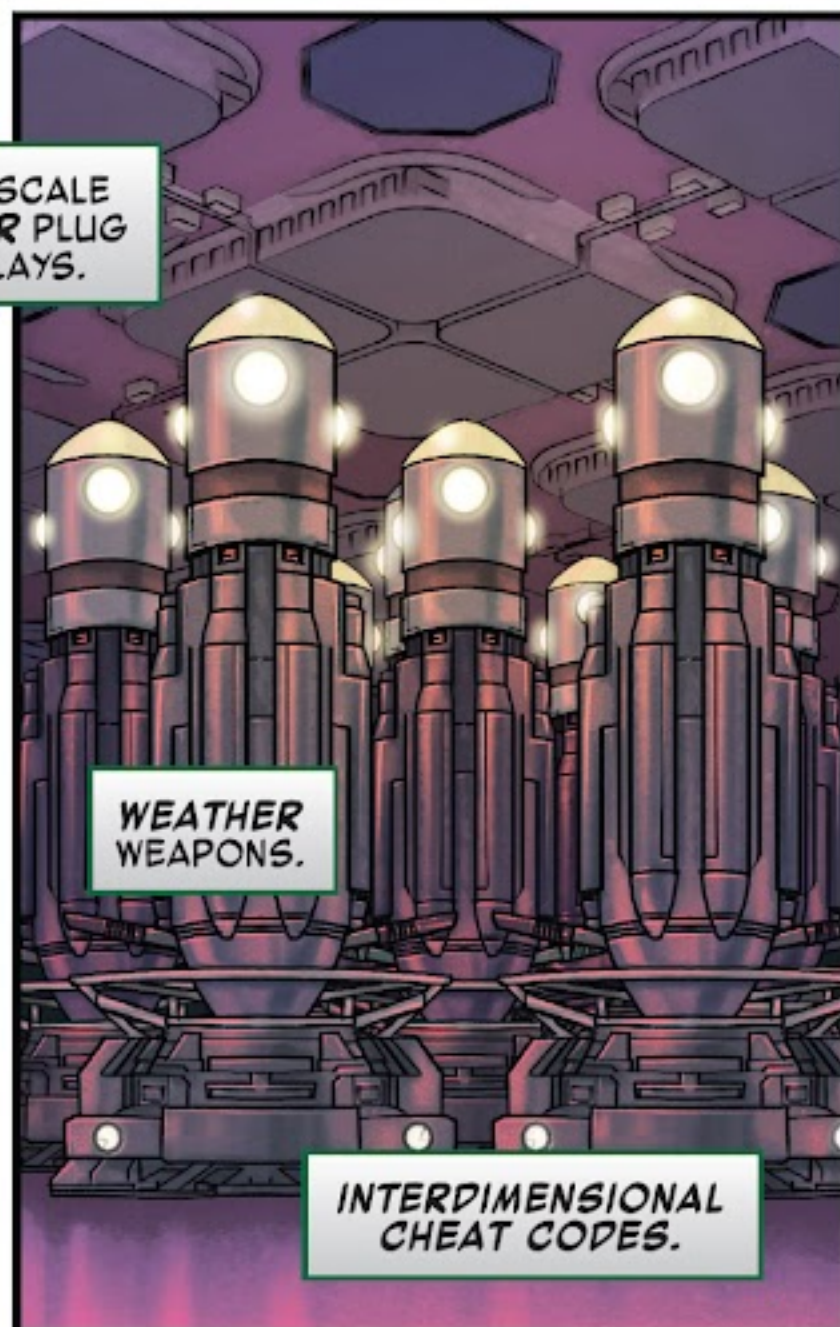


BIOLOGICALLY ENGINEERED NIGHTMARES.

CHEMICAL DOOMS DAYS.

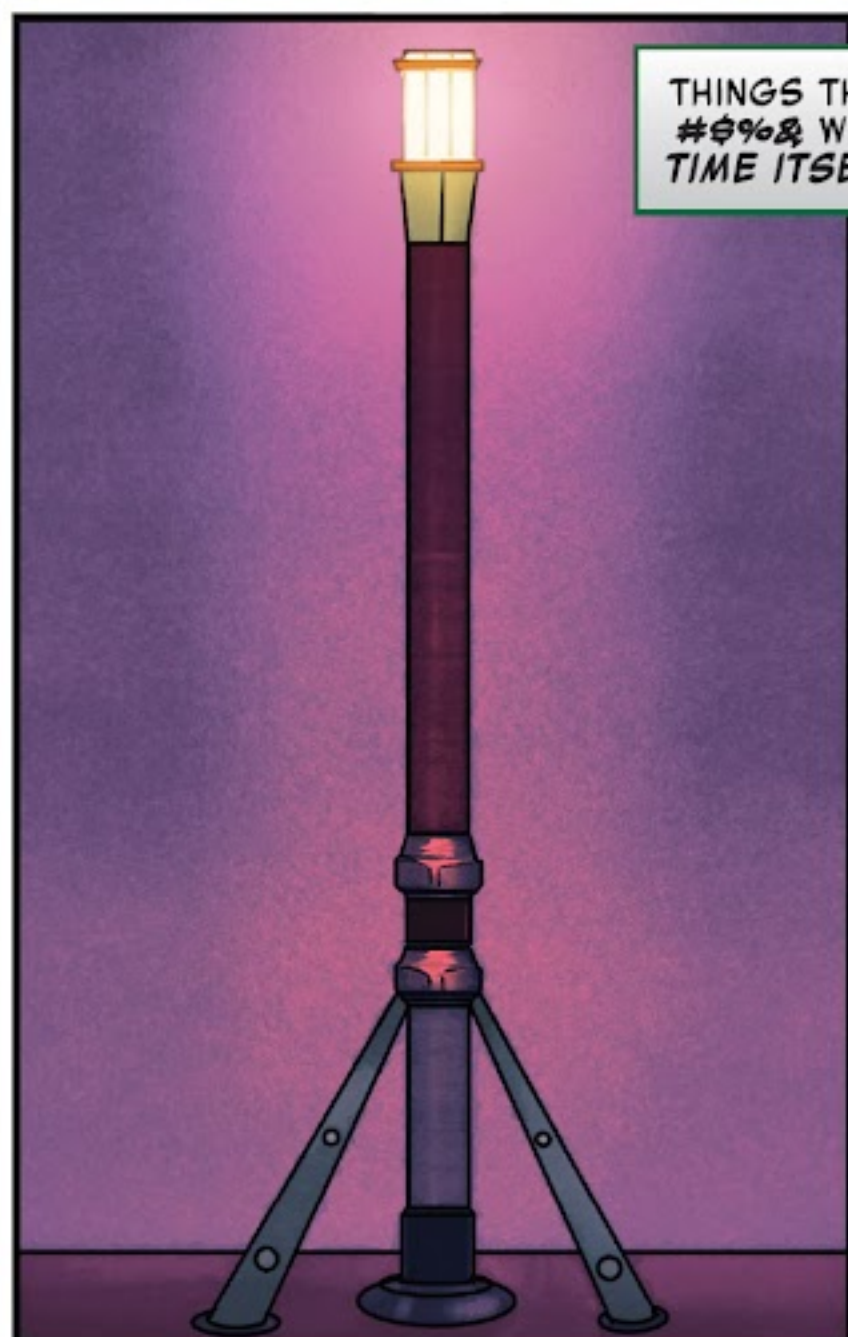


LARGE-SCALE NUCLEAR PLUG AND PLAYS.

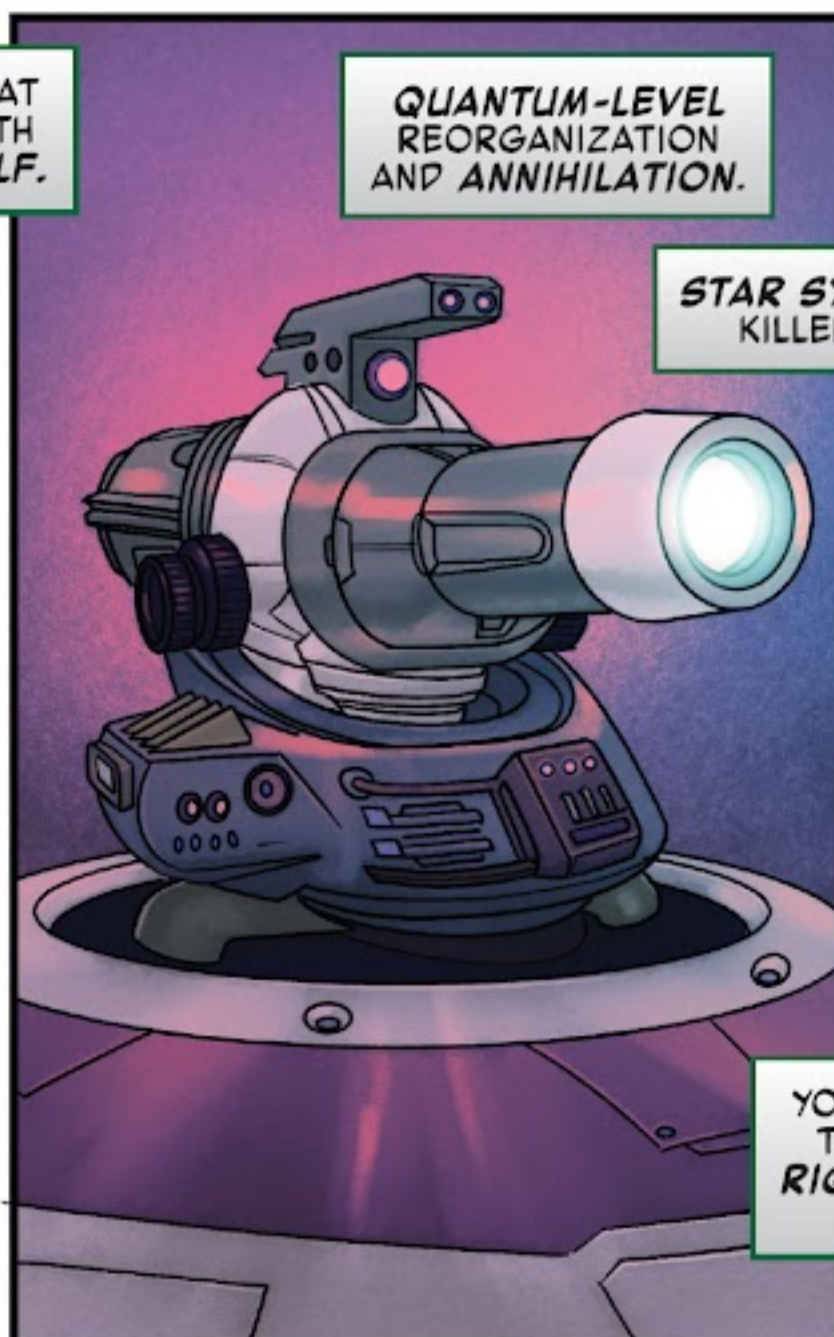


WEATHER WEAPONS.

INTERDIMENSIONAL CHEAT CODES.

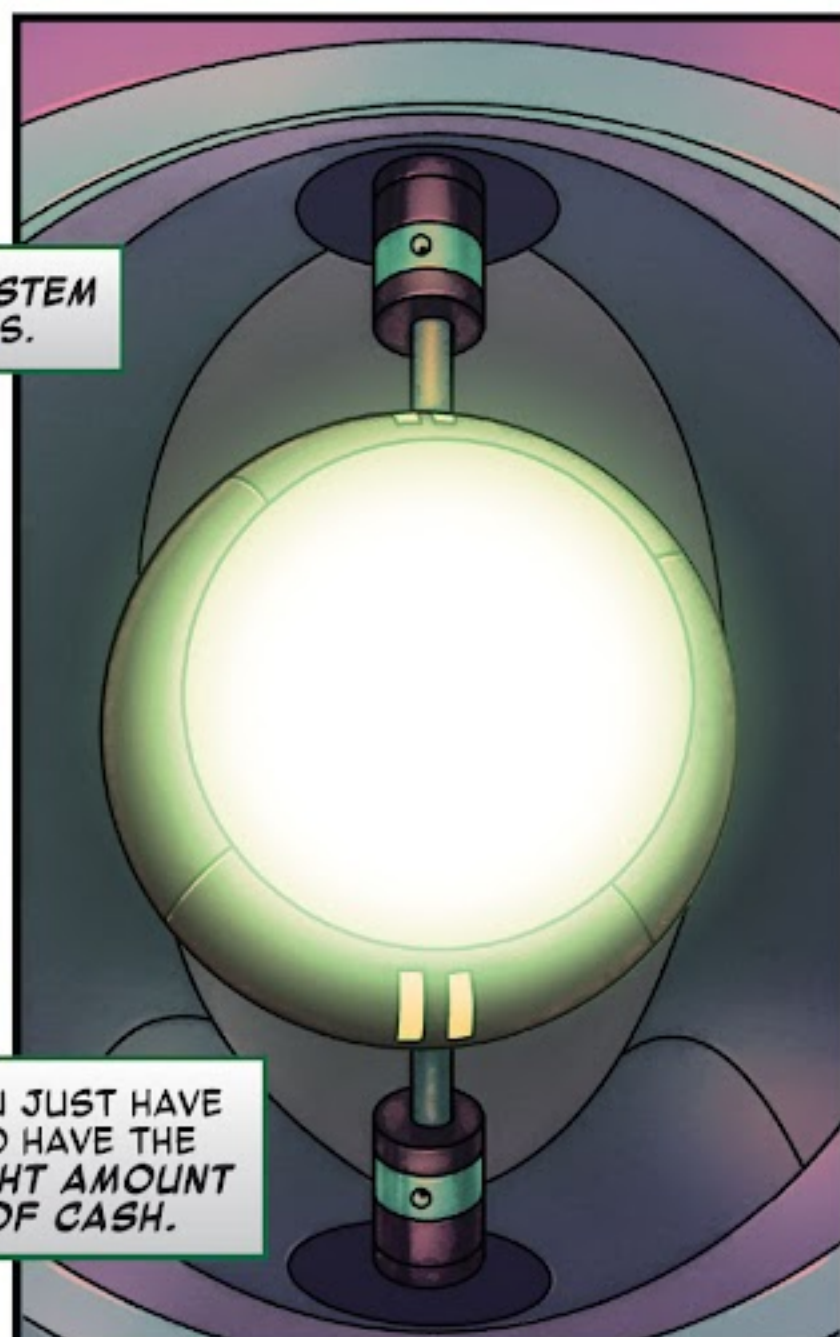


THINGS THAT *#\$%&* WITH TIME ITSELF.



QUANTUM-LEVEL REORGANIZATION AND ANNIHILATION.

STAR SYSTEM KILLERS.



YOU JUST HAVE TO HAVE THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF CASH.







IT'S MAKLUAN.

MAKLUAN? AS IN THE GALAXY-CONQUERING ALIEN KIND?

THE MANDARIN...

THE MANDARIN'S BEEN DEAD FOR YEARS.



BUT HIS RINGS ARE STILL OUT THERE.



VIC WAS WRAPPED UP IN SOURCE CONTROL. SOURCE CONTROL SELLS HIGH-GRADE TECH AND WEAPONS.

IT HAD TO BE THE RINGS.

HE TOLD ME HE HAD SOMETHING HE NEEDED MY HELP WITH.

SO, TITANIUM MAN KILLED HIM. TOOK THEM FOR HIMSELF.



NO. VIC BETRAYED HIS EMPLOYERS BY REACHING OUT TO RHODEY AND ME.



WHICH CONFIRMS TITANIUM MAN IS WORKING FOR SOURCE CONTROL.



"CONFIRMS"?

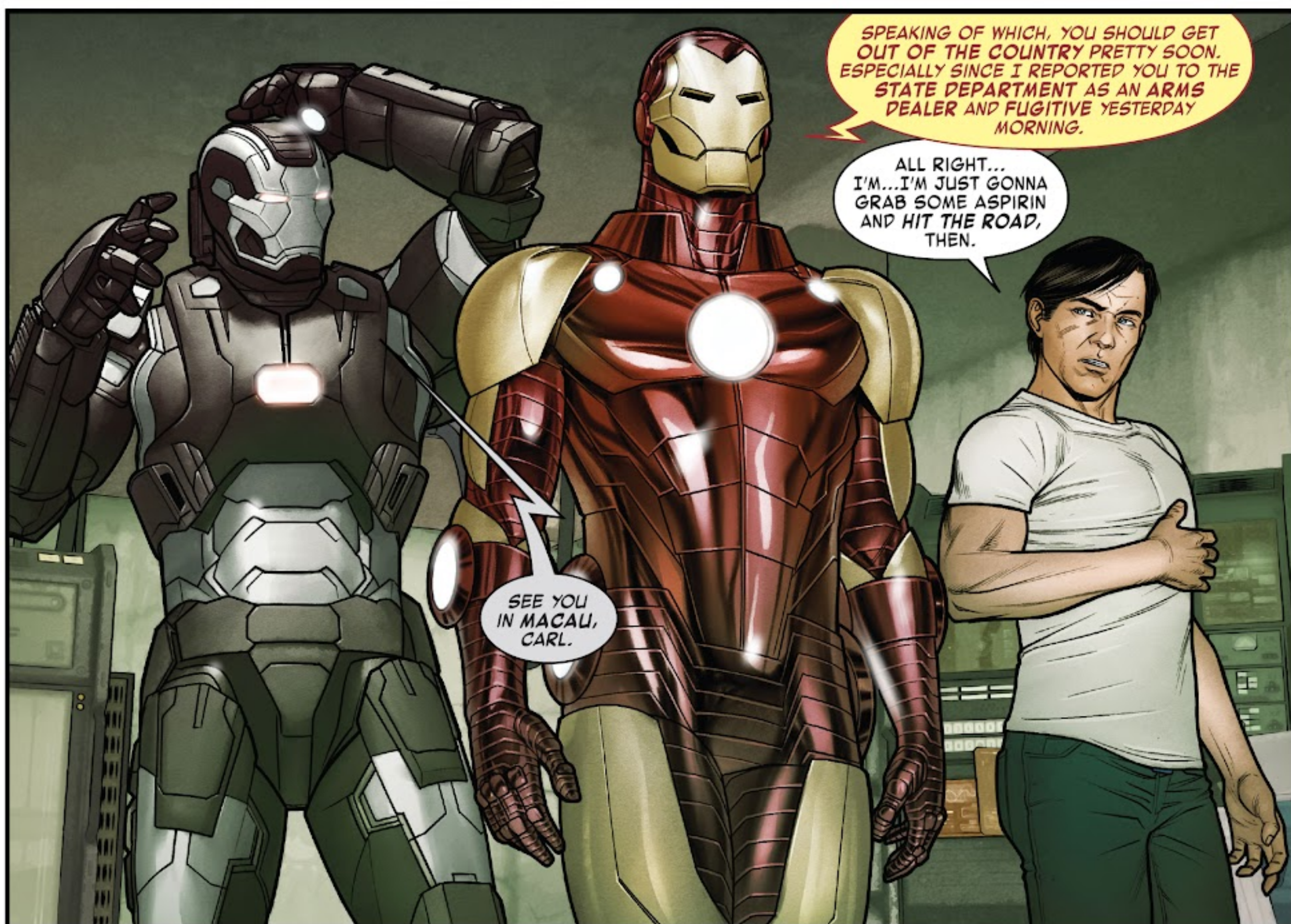
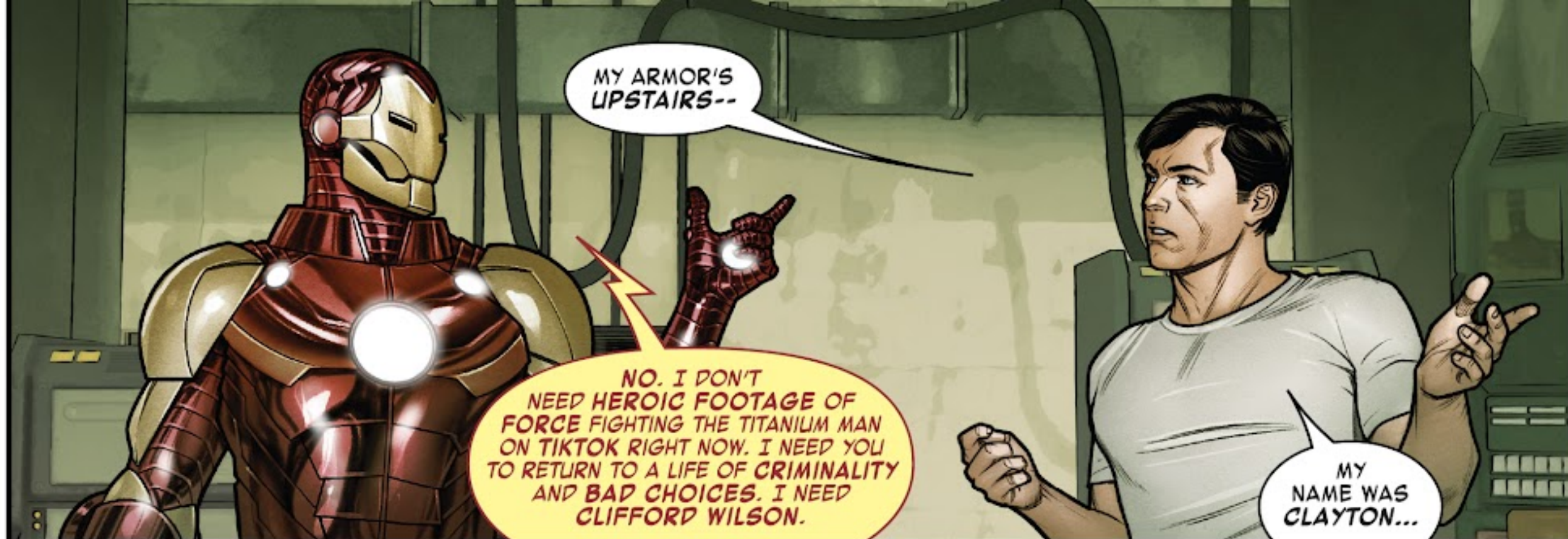


<ASSAILANT. INBOUND.>

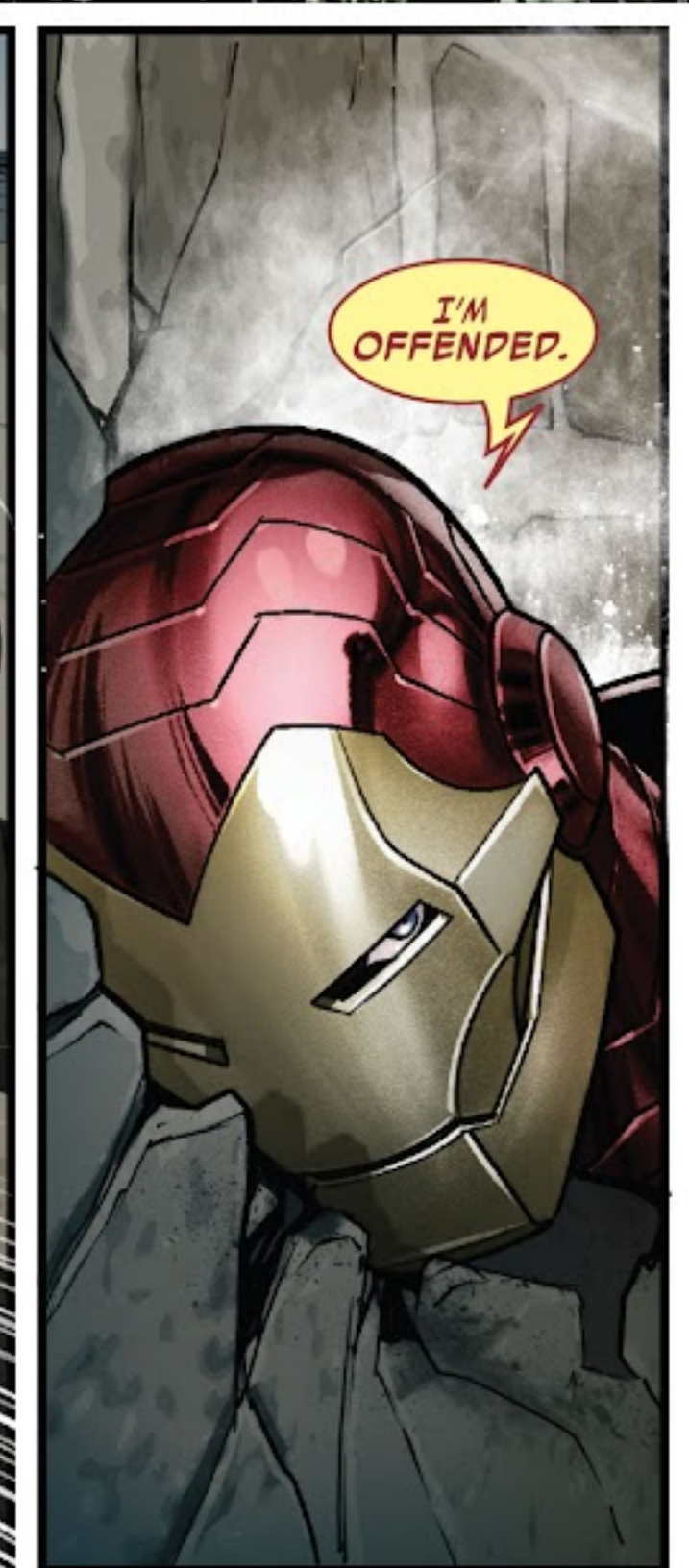
BORIS IS EARLY. LET'S GO.

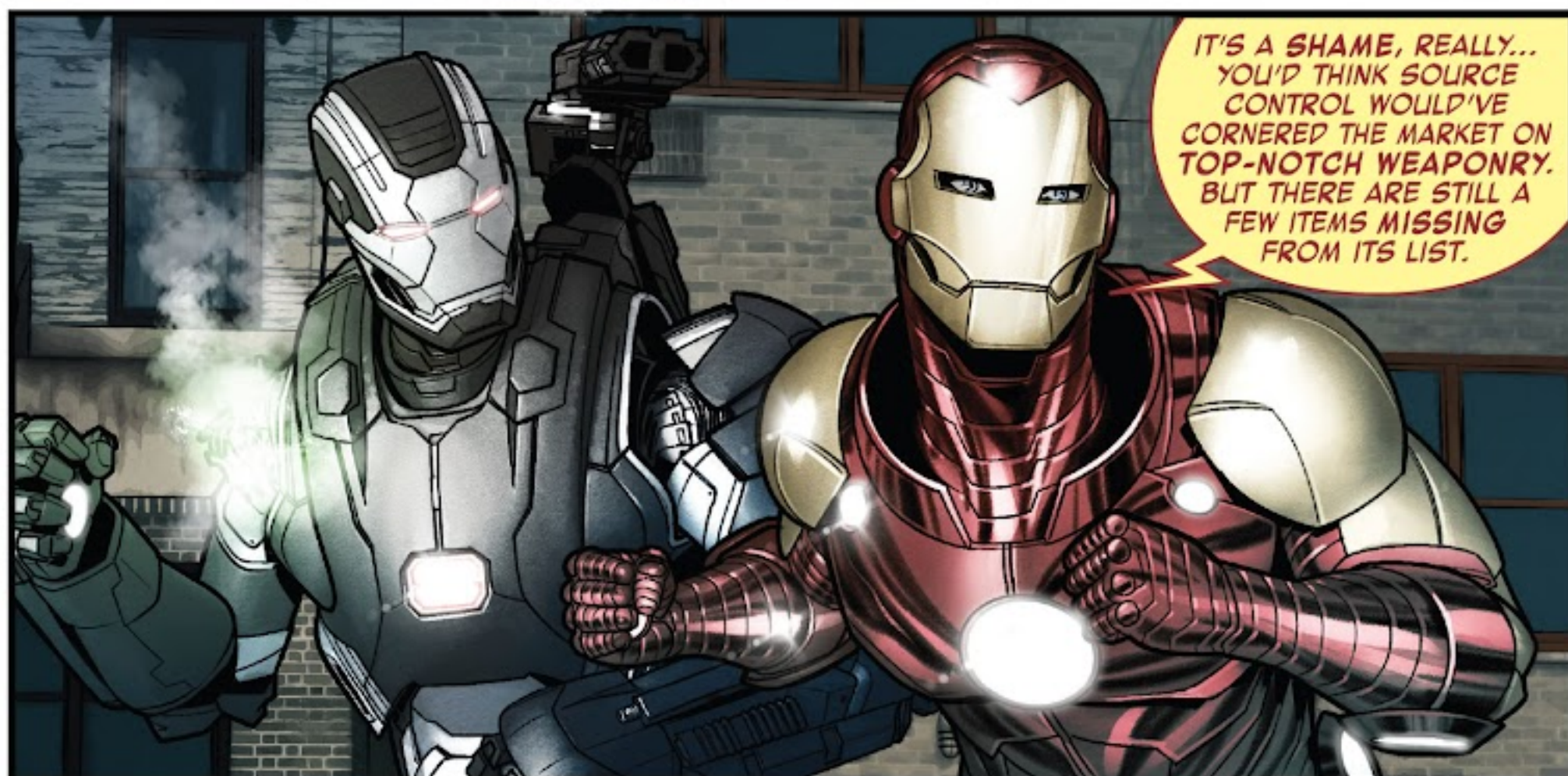
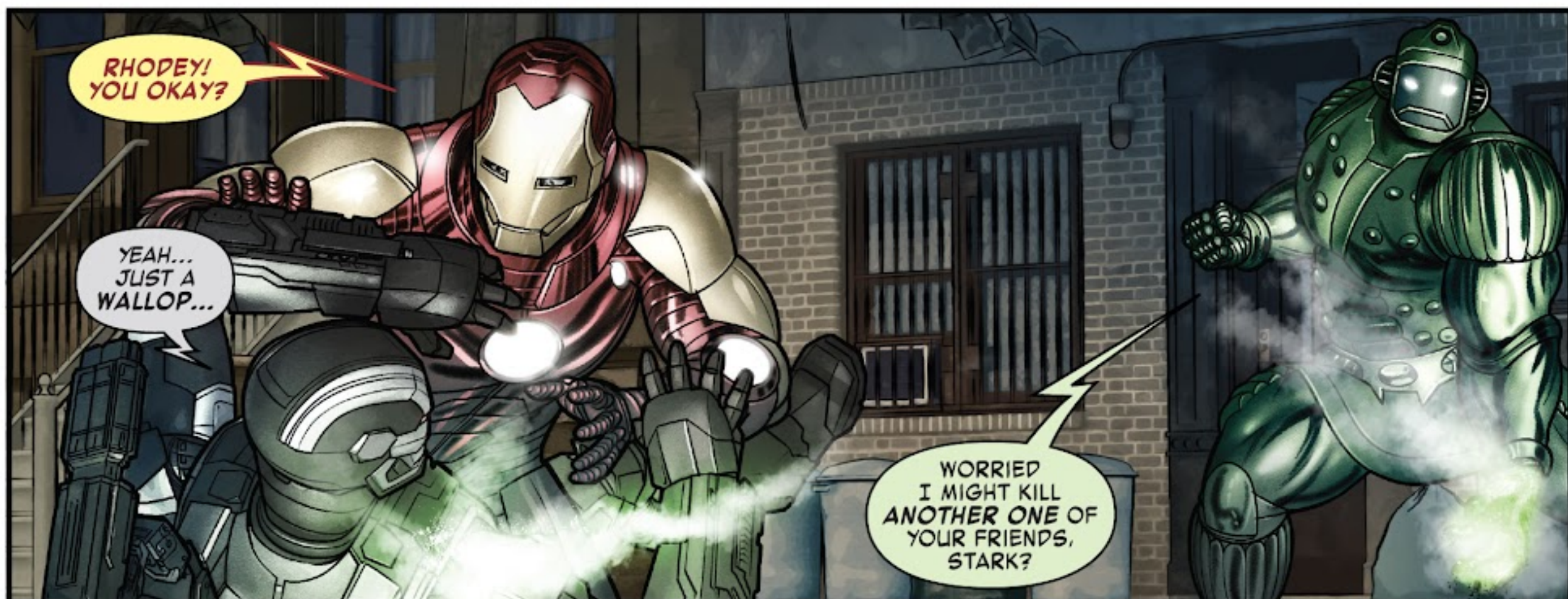
BECAUSE YOU ARE A LITTLE BIT.

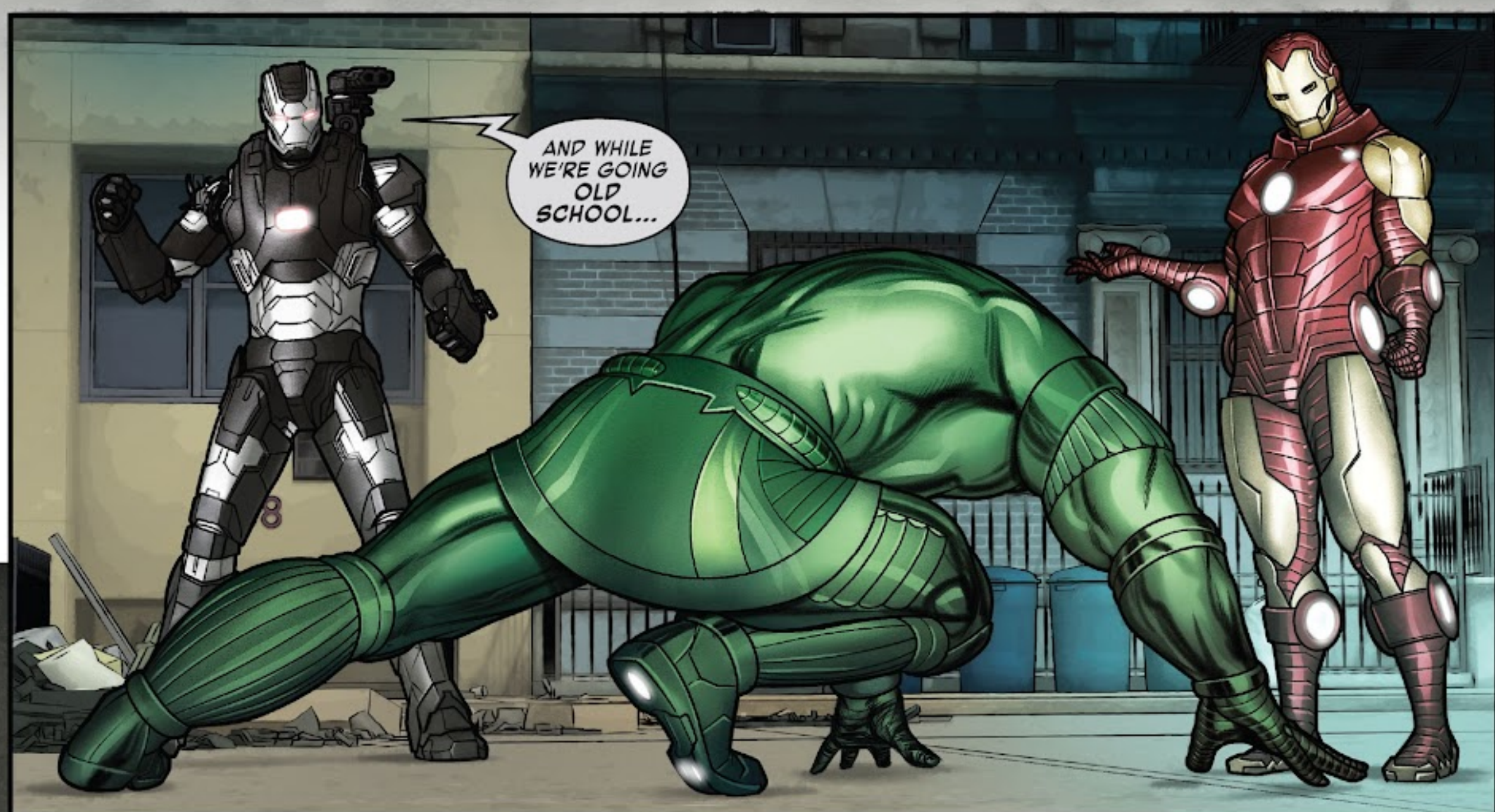
FELLAS, WHY DO I FEEL OUT OF THE LOOP HERE?



AH
CRIPES.



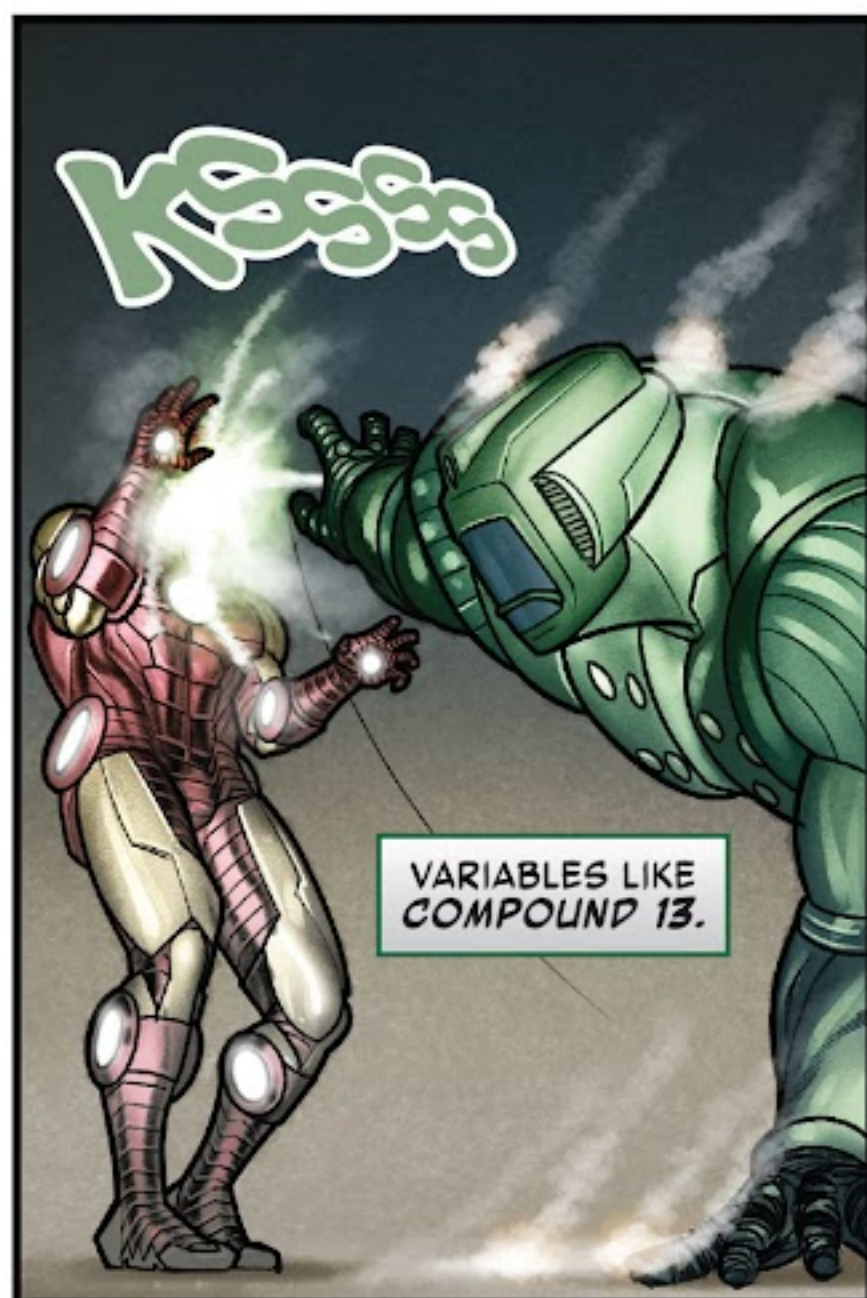






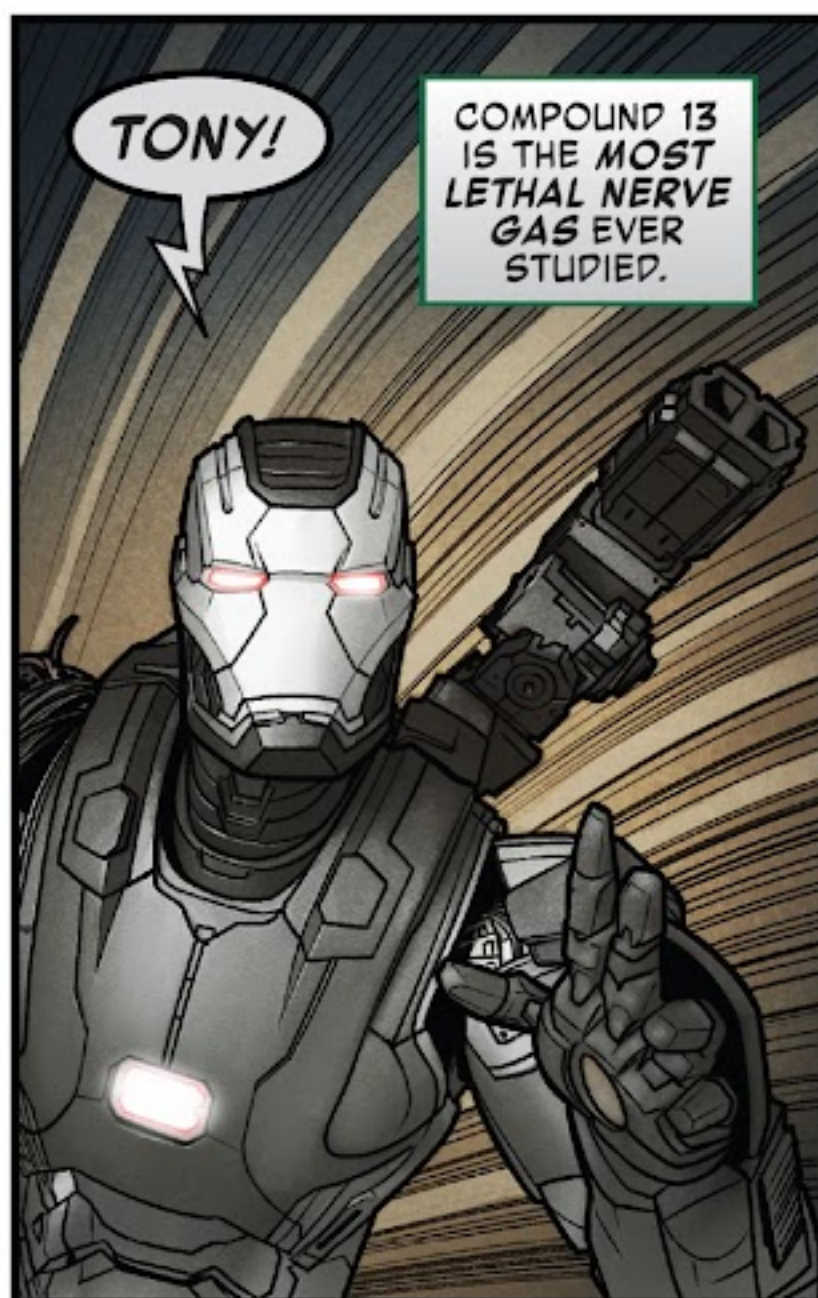
TELL ME
WHERE THE
RINGS ARE,
BORIS.

UNKNOWN
VARIABLES CAN WREAK
HAVOC. EVEN ON A
SOLID PLAN.



Kraaaa

VARIABLES LIKE
COMPOUND 13.



TONY!

COMPOUND 13
IS THE MOST
LETHAL NERVE
GAS EVER
STUDIED.



<FILTRATION
SYSTEMS AT: 100.
PERCENT.><83.><61.>
<CORROSION RATE:
EXPONENTIAL...>
<47.>

ACK...
KAFF...
KAFF KAFF...
HCK...
HNNNH...



...HNNNH...
HELMET...
GNNNH...

WHAT?

...FILTERS
FAILING...
SUFFOCATING...
HELMET--
OFF...

COMPOUND 13 KILLED
CAPTAIN MARVEL.
A MAN WHO COULD FLY
THROUGH SPACE ON HIS
OWN FASTER THAN
THE SPEED OF LIGHT.

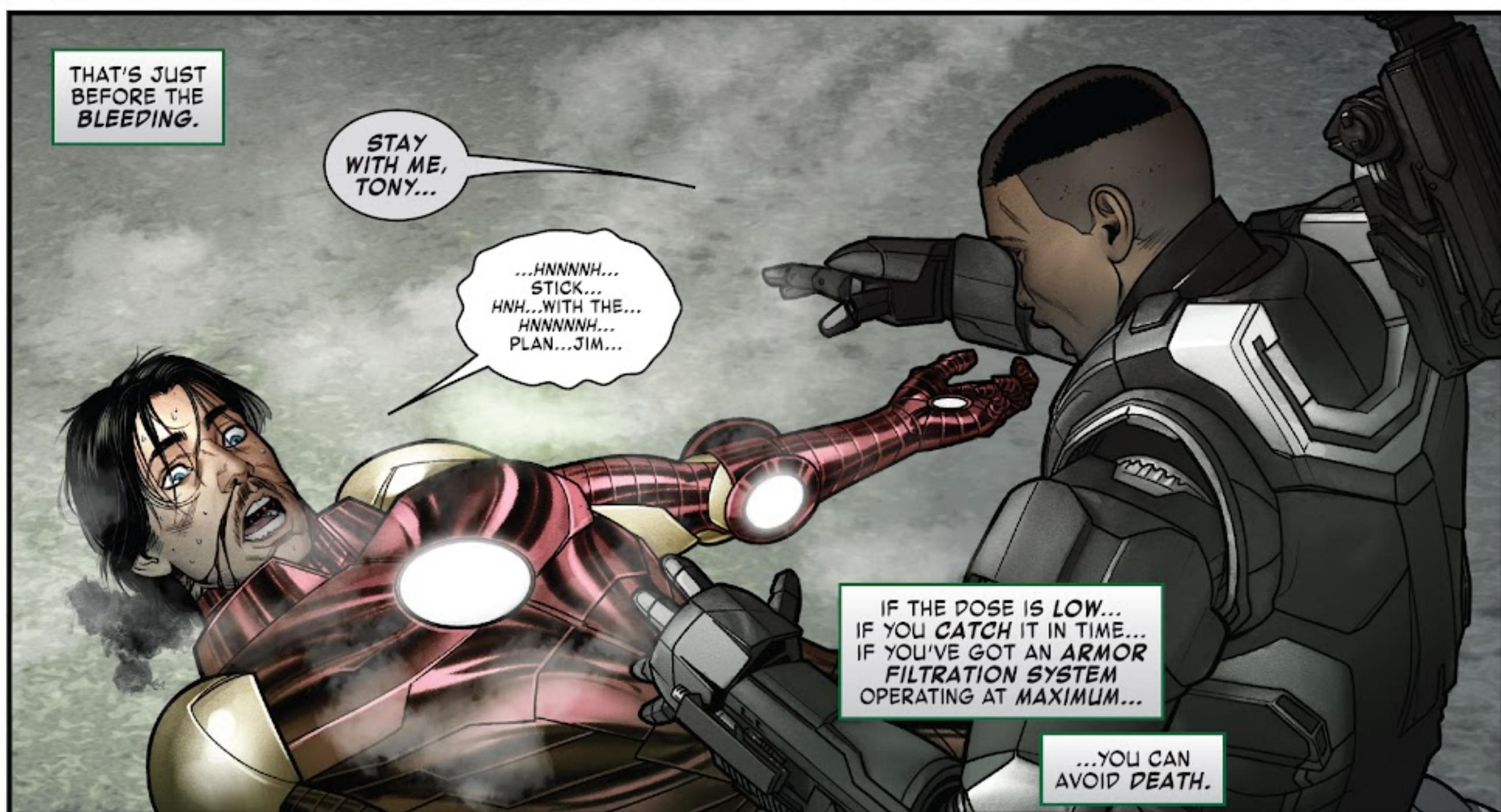


HOW MUCH DID HE HIT YOU WITH--?

GYNNNNH...



I DON'T KNOW WHY I ASKED. COMPOUND 13 BEGINS TO **PARALYZE** YOUR ENTIRE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.



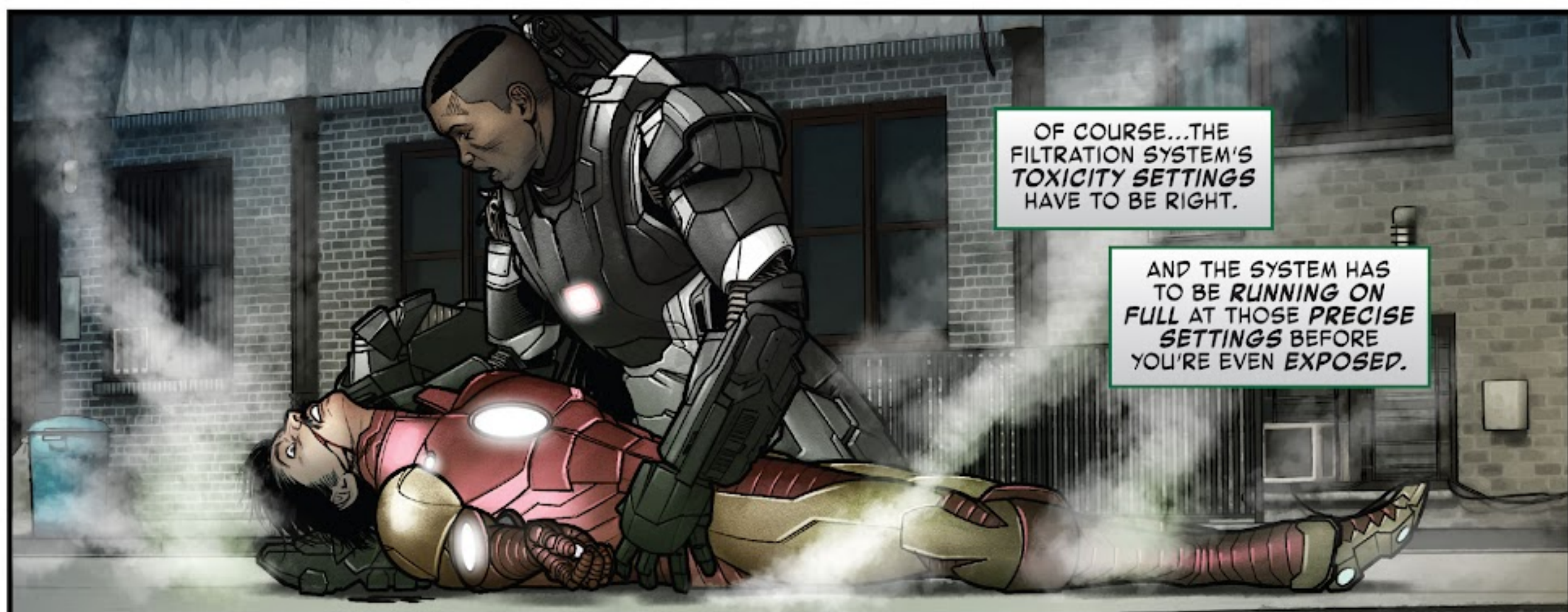
THAT'S JUST BEFORE THE BLEEDING.

STAY WITH ME, TONY...

...HNNNNH...
STICK...
HNN...WITH THE...
HNNNNH...
PLAN...JIM...

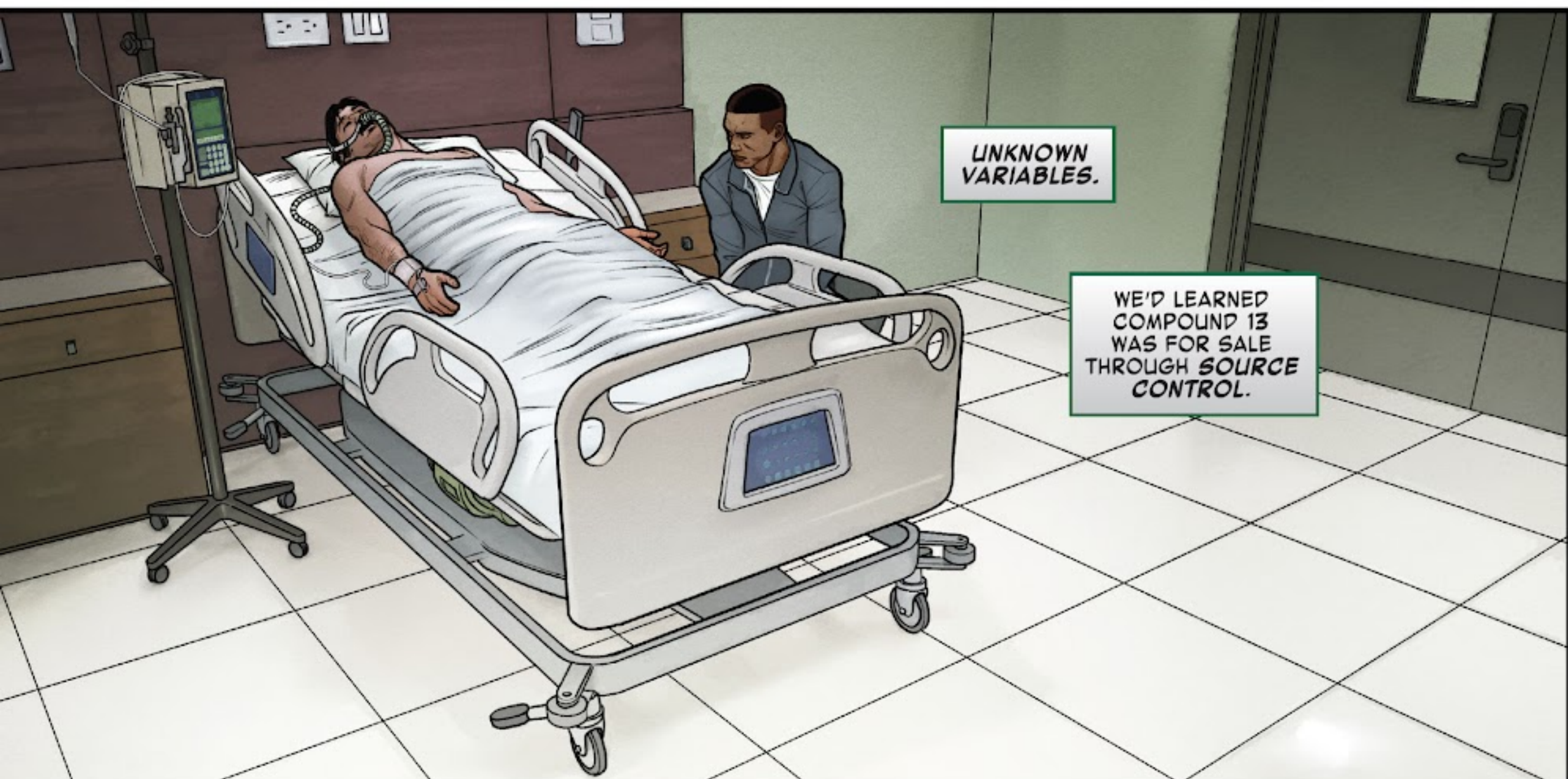
IF THE DOSE IS LOW...
IF YOU **CATCH** IT IN TIME...
IF YOU'VE GOT AN **ARMOR FILTRATION SYSTEM** OPERATING AT MAXIMUM...

...YOU CAN AVOID **DEATH**.



OF COURSE...THE FILTRATION SYSTEM'S **TOXICITY SETTINGS** HAVE TO BE RIGHT.

AND THE SYSTEM HAS TO BE **RUNNING ON FULL** AT THOSE **PRECISE SETTINGS** BEFORE YOU'RE EVEN **EXPOSED**.



UNKNOWN
VARIABLES.

WE'D LEARNED
COMPOUND 13
WAS FOR SALE
THROUGH *SOURCE*
CONTROL.



AND NOW SO ARE THE
MANDARIN'S RINGS,
APPARENTLY.



THEN THE *WORLD* FOUND
OUT ABOUT *IRON MAN*.
TONY WAS OUT OF
COMMISSION.



MAYBE AT
DEATH'S
DOOR.

STARK HIT WITH TOXIN IN LATEST IRON MAN BOUT; RECOVERY UNKNOWN.

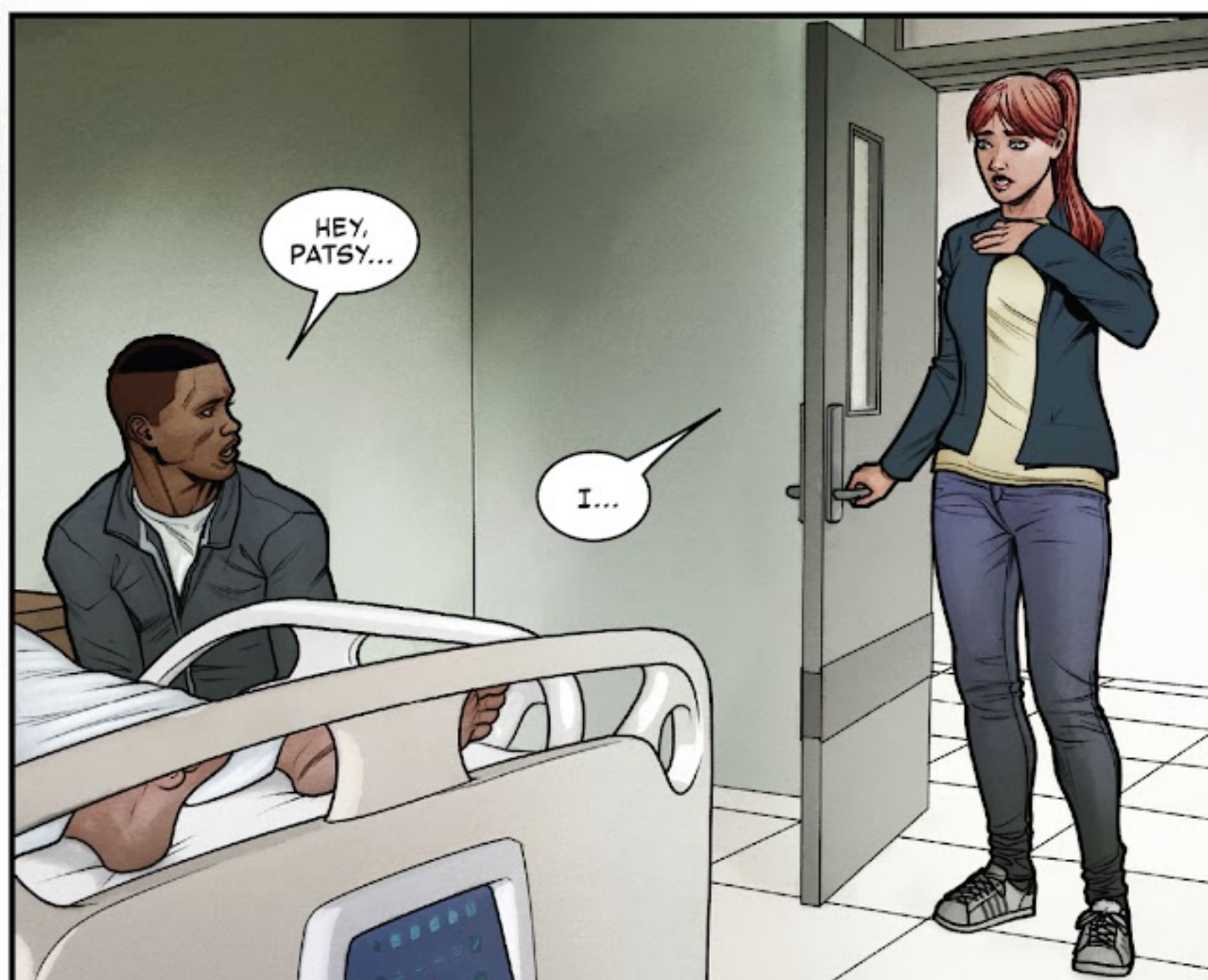
NEWS

DEVELOPING



ONLY A FEW WEEKS
AGO, TONY WAS
ABLE TO BRING ME
BACK TO LIFE
AFTER *BREAKING*
MY NECK.*

*SEE
IRON MAN
#18. --TOM



HEY,
PATSY...

I...

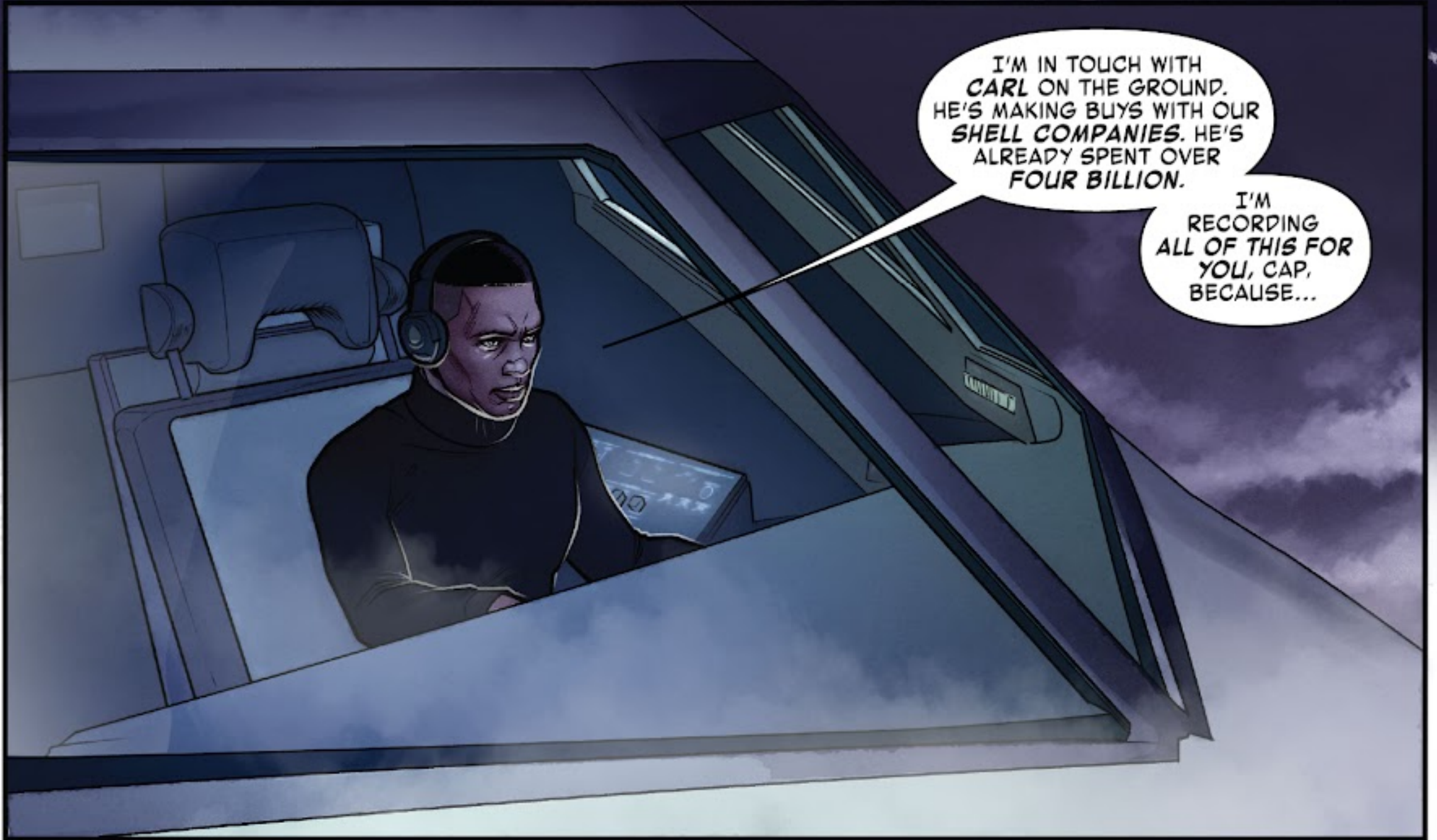






TONY STARK IS IN
A COMA IN NEW
YORK CITY.

BUT MACAU IS THE HUB
FOR SOURCE CONTROL.
WHOEVER'S IN CHARGE...
ODDS ARE, THEY'RE HERE.

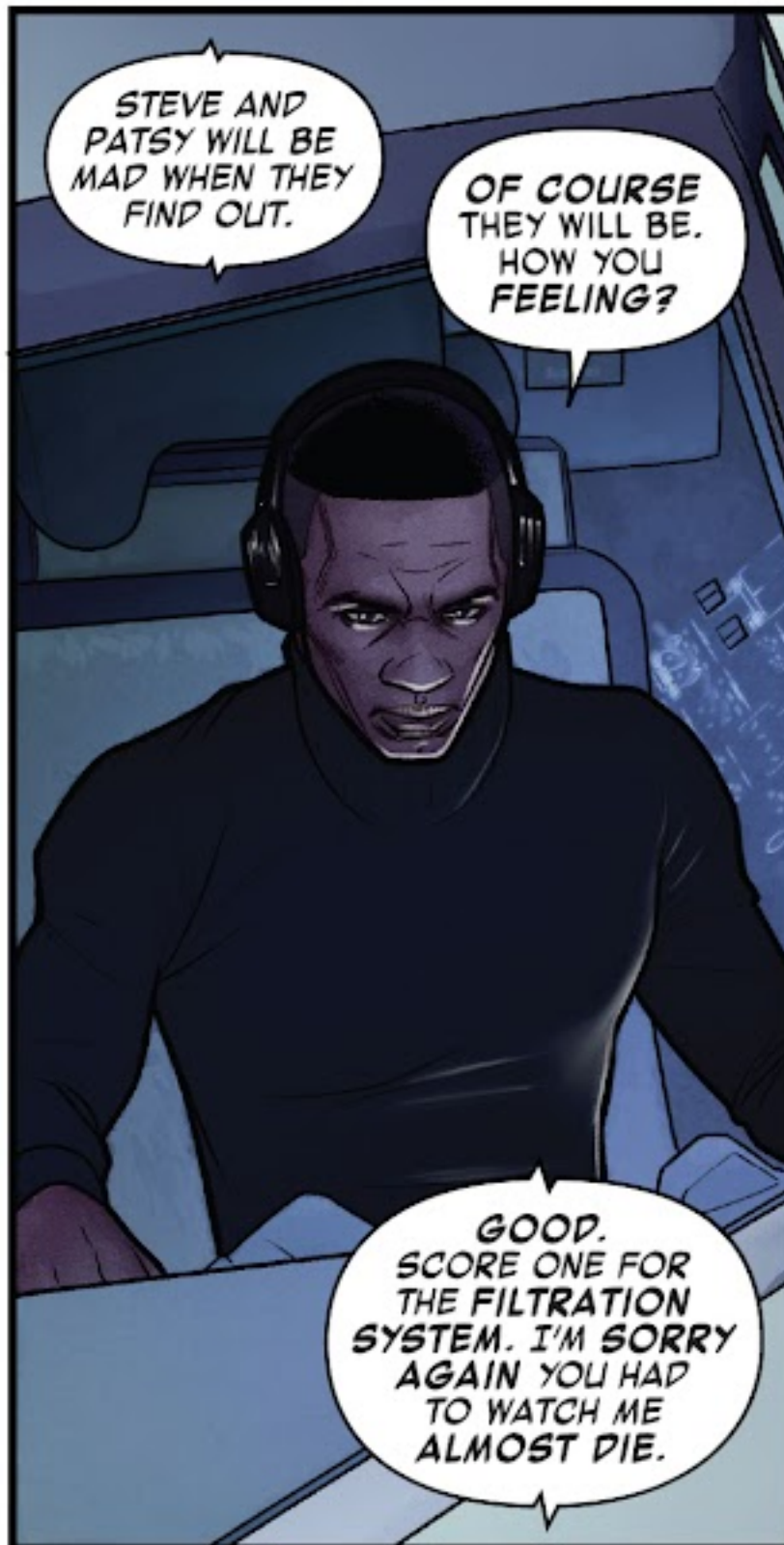


I'M IN TOUCH WITH
CARL ON THE GROUND.
HE'S MAKING BUYS WITH OUR
SHELL COMPANIES. HE'S
ALREADY SPENT OVER
FOUR BILLION.

I'M
RECORDING
ALL OF THIS FOR
YOU, CAP,
BECAUSE...



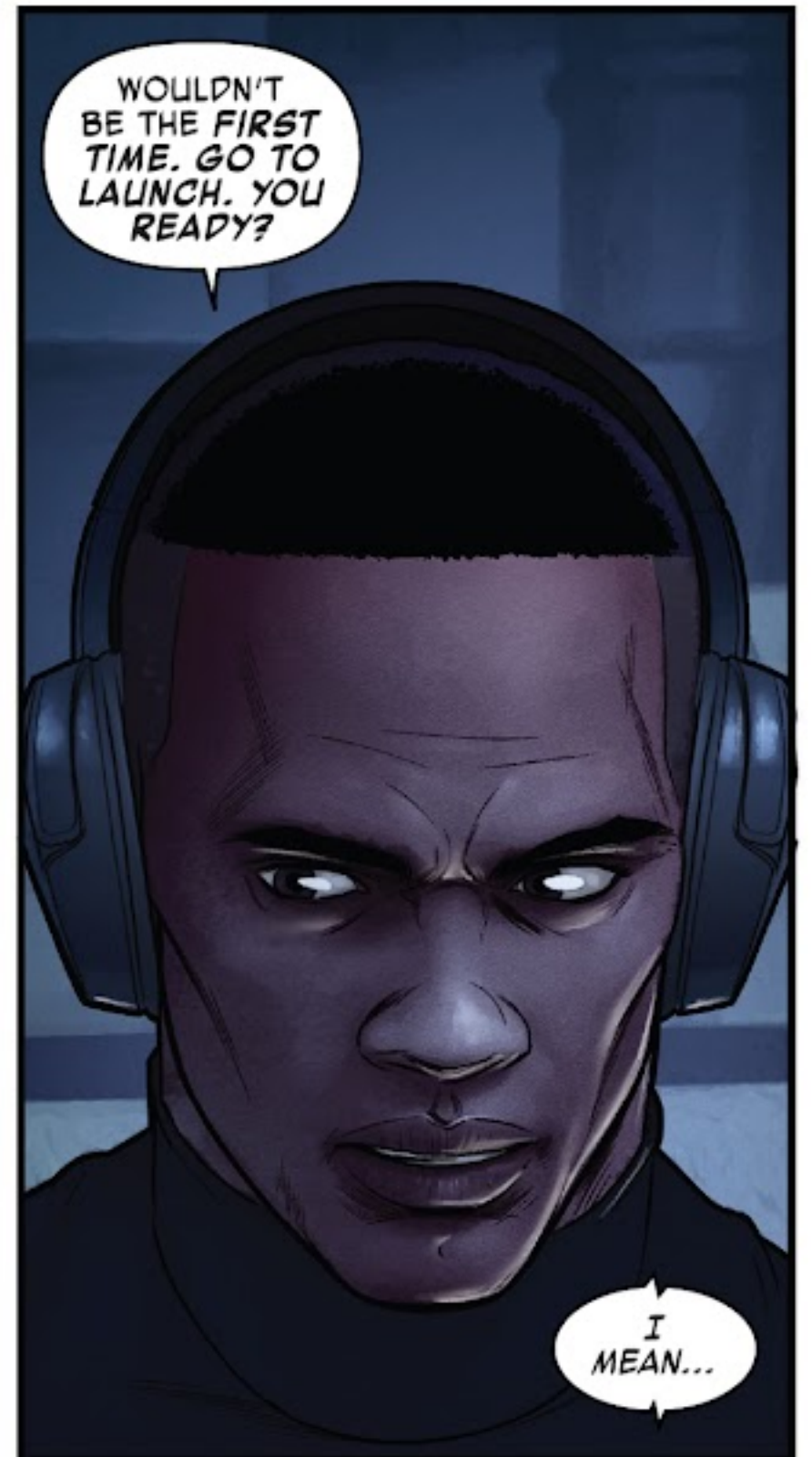
...WELL, BECAUSE OF THE
VARIABLES. ANY OF THIS
COULD GO *SIDWAYS*, BUT
THIS WAY...YOU'LL AT LEAST
UNDERSTAND AFTER
THE FACT.



STEVE AND
PATSY WILL BE
MAD WHEN THEY
FIND OUT.

OF COURSE
THEY WILL BE.
HOW YOU
FEELING?

GOOD.
SCORE ONE FOR
THE FILTRATION
SYSTEM. I'M SORRY
AGAIN YOU HAD
TO WATCH ME
ALMOST DIE.



WOULDN'T
BE THE *FIRST*
TIME. GO TO
LAUNCH. YOU
READY?

I
MEAN...



...AS
MUCH AS I
EVER AM.

THAT'S
WHAT
WORRIES
ME.

THAT'S WHAT
ALWAYS WORRIES
ME ABOUT
TONY STARK.

TO BE
CONTINUED!

NEXT



OPERATING IN STEALTH MODE WITH JIM RHODES, IRON MAN HAS LANDED IN MACAU AND IMMERSSED HIMSELF IN SOURCE CONTROL. IF IRON MAN IS GOING TO ACQUIRE THE MANDARIN'S RINGS, IT'S GOING TO REQUIRE TONY STARK-LEVEL CAPITAL AND STRATEGY. BUT SINISTER FORCES ARE READY TO PULL THE RINGS OUT OF IRON MAN'S DEAD HANDS IF THEY HAVE TO...

